

**MAKING
THE
CHOICE
FOR**

FOREST STEWARDSHIP



A young child with dark hair, wearing a dark jacket and dark pants, is leaning against a large tree trunk in a forest. The child is looking towards the camera. The background is a dense forest with many trees and some dry leaves on the ground.

Forest Stewardship in Massachusetts

If you own some woodland, we invite you to join the Massachusetts Forest Stewardship Program. Since its beginning in 1992, over 2,500 landowners owning a total of more than 214,000 acres have made the choice to enroll in the Forest Stewardship Program. These people are enjoying their woodlands — creating trails, improving habitat for wildlife, cutting firewood, and earning some timber income. They are attending workshops, visiting other properties, sharing ideas, and rethinking ways to work with their land. They are finding that Stewardship is a life-long process of learning by observing and doing — accumulating information and experience — and turning it into a rich store of knowledge to benefit the land.



Did you know that Massachusetts is the eighth most forested state in the country? Private woodland ownership accounts for 75% of the forest in Massachusetts. Collectively, you and your fellow woodland owners will make decisions that will have significant and long lasting environmental, social, and economic impacts on the Massachusetts landscape. Many woodland owners have realized this and are taking advantage of the technical and financial assistance that the Forest Stewardship Program has to offer. The Program is helping them engage in long term sustainable forest management.

You may wonder whether leaving your woods alone isn't the best way to conserve the forest. In some cases, it may be. But leaving forestland alone is just one of many stewardship options. Sustainable forest management is compatible with a healthy forest when human needs are directed to appropriate parts of the forest. For example, resilient areas can support activities such as intensive recreation and/or wood production; fragile areas may be left alone. What's key is that the forest's ability to self-renew is always conserved.

Your privately owned woodland has the potential to offer you and your family many personal benefits — a place to observe wildlife, hike, ski, cut firewood, harvest timber or find privacy — the opportunities are many. But without even setting foot in your woods, the rest of us will also reap the rewards of your good forest stewardship in the form of clean air and water, greater local and regional biodiversity, a beautiful landscape, a local wood supply, and much more.

Because healthy private forestlands are so important, the Stewardship Program educates, informs, and provides financial help to landowners. Explore the following pages to discover how the Forest Stewardship Program can help you get started with the stewardship of your woodland.



WHY A FOREST STEWARDSHIP PLAN?

At the heart of good stewardship are questions that each landowner must ask about their land. What is the nature of this place? What is it capable of? What can I do with it that is in keeping with its ability to renew itself? What can I do to leave it in a better condition than when I found it? A Forest Stewardship plan helps to answer these questions, as it establishes a foundation of information on which to build new findings and experiences over the years.

With any long range project, developing a plan sharpens your focus on the future. It sets down clear steps that will help you accomplish your broad goals. While you already may know a great deal about your forest and its value, working with a professional to develop a plan expands your knowledge and appreciation for your forest's ecological and economic values.

As a practical matter, following a plan can make you eligible for cost-sharing assistance.

ENROLLING IN THE FOREST STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Each Stewardship property must have an approved 10-year Forest Stewardship plan to be enrolled in the Program. Forestland forms the core of an owner's Stewardship property. Related farmland, wetlands, and other open land can be included as well. Under federal guidelines you are eligible for financial incentives if:

- you are a private, non-industrial or private nonprofit owner; or
- hold a long term lease on the land to be covered



Ownerships/leaseholders must not be:

- state, federal
- corporations with publicly traded stock
- principally engaged in the processing of wood products

Some municipal forestlands are eligible.

Dept. of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)

Service Foresters (see page 14 for regional offices) can answer specific questions you might have on joining the Program and availability of incentives.

WHAT'S IN THE PLAN?

1. a statement of your long term goals and objectives
2. a descriptive overview of the property including its place in the landscape, the local land use pattern, comments on the ecological value of the property in relation to nearby protected lands, and a summary of key management recommendations.
3. a physical description of your forest and its suitability for various uses, based on a detailed, on-the-ground resource inventory. The inventory includes:

PLANTS: trees/shrubs/herbaceous species as they occur in associations, their abundance and relative age.

SOILS: moisture, drainage, productivity, erodability

TOPOGRAPHY: terrain, slopes

HABITAT FEATURES: plants for food & cover, snag and den trees, seeps, openings, corridors, etc.

SPECIAL FEATURES: views, trails, specimen trees, vernal pools, ledges, etc.



FOREST CONDITION: vigor, land-use history, health, storm damage

INVASIVE NON-NATIVE PLANTS: species, distribution, potential threat

4. a schedule of stewardship activities to be accomplished in the next 10 years to meet your goals
5. a property map that shows boundaries, vegetation types and management units; features such as streams, waterbodies, cultural features, woods roads, proposed and existing trails, etc.
6. a locus map that outlines your property on a U.S.G.S. toposheet

Although Stewardship plans must include the above items, this information is presented in the context of your goals and objectives. Plans are tailored to reflect how much work you realistically expect to accomplish in a 10-year period, how much you want to do yourself versus contract out, how frequently you wish to conduct activities, and the economics of your situation. *Landowners are not legally obligated to undertake activities listed in their Stewardship plans, and amendments can be made at any time.*

WHO WILL WRITE YOUR PLAN?

A Stewardship Plan must be prepared either by a Massachusetts licensed forester or by the landowner. Most landowners choose to hire a forester rather than try to write the plan themselves. These suggestions will help you find suitable professional assistance.

1. Contact the Service Forester in your area who works for the Massachusetts Dept. of Conservation and Recreation. He or she may



be able to make a free, initial visit to discuss management options and programs with you, and will have a list of Massachusetts licensed foresters who are available for Stewardship planning and many other forest-related services (see page 14).

2. Shop around for a Massachusetts licensed forester as you would a carpenter or a doctor. Talk to neighbors and friends. Look for the professional best suited to you and your interests, someone who communicates easily and effectively with you, and whose job and price fit your budget.
3. Hire an experienced generalist who can make a thorough evaluation of your woodland for a broad range of resource values. A specialist can be consulted if, for example, expertise on a rare species is needed.
4. Ask about other forest-related programs and incentives that might save you money, services that can help you to accomplish your goals, organizations or sources of information that may enrich your knowledge and enjoyment of your forest. A good forester will be familiar with permits, regulations and laws related to forest use in Massachusetts. At a minimum, the forester you hire should have a thorough understanding of:

- Forest Stewardship Program
- Forest Cutting Practices Law (Chapter 132)
- Forest, Farm, and Openspace Tax Laws (Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B)

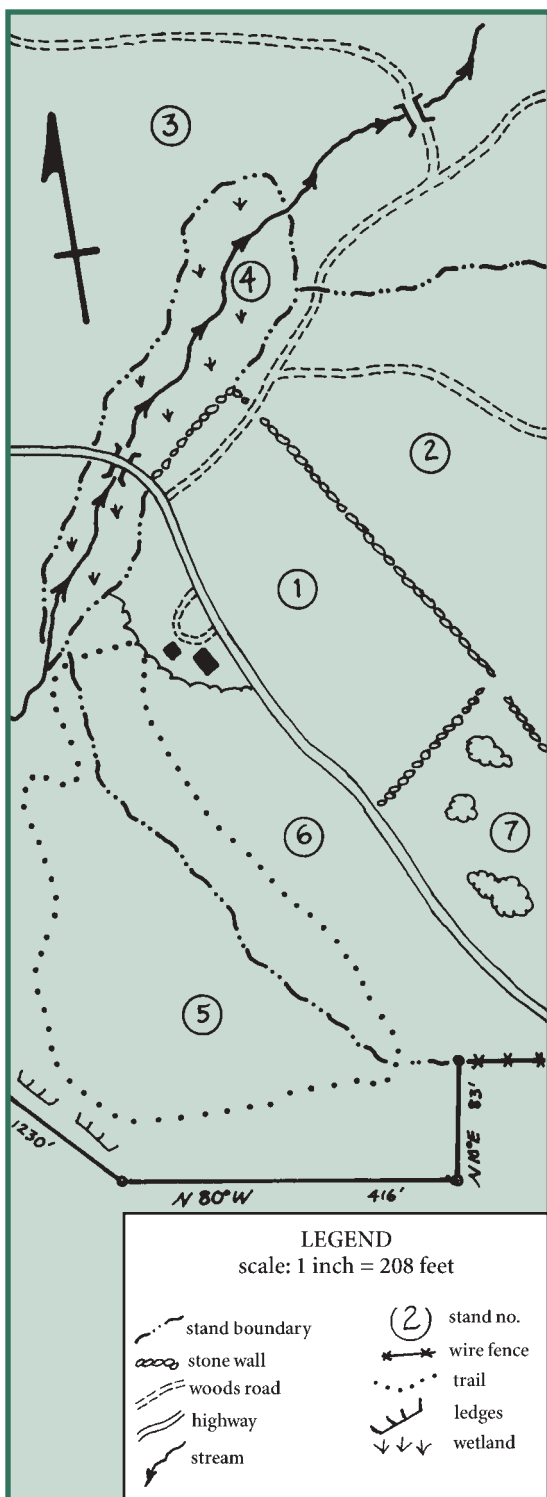
He or she also will likely know where to locate more information on long-term land protection strategies such as conservation restrictions and estate planning.



CONSIDERING YOUR LONG-TERM GOALS

Keep in mind that *goals* are broad and long-ranging: some might be achieved in a decade, others might span your lifetime and beyond. *Objectives* are the specific activities designed to achieve your overall goals. Look at the next panel to see the examples listed below:

GOAL	OBJECTIVE
diversify songbird habitat	moderate thinning in mature hardwood stand no. 2, allowing stumps to sprout and grow into a 10-15' high vegetation layer
produce high quality timber for income	thin pole size oak in stand no. 2, removing crooked or damaged trees that shade the best stems
expand ski trail network	lay out & clear connector; tie in with skid roads in stands no. 1 & 3 that will be used for timber removal
produce firewood for home use	thin 1 acre/year in 10-acres section of hardwood stand no. 2
reduce erosion in old gravel pit	stabilize slope & restore organic material so revegetation process can begin
generate income for children's education	harvest 1/3 of mature pine sawlogs, also thinning out poor quality trees in stand no. 1
maintain wildland area for solitude and nature study	no action in stand no. 5
protect rare fern in limestone cliffs	contact Natural Heritage Endangered Species Program for information and recommendations
maintain old field type for habitat & aesthetic diversity	brush mow around old pines in stand no. 7 every other year to keep area open





COSTS & FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

No doubt you are wondering what the costs of this program might be. Although they vary, the first cost is for the development of a Forest Stewardship Plan. In many cases this activity may be cost-shared. By cost-sharing we mean that some of the cost of having the plan prepared can be reimbursed. To qualify for cost-sharing, a property must have a minimum of 10 predominantly forested acres* (excluding buildings) and no existing forest management plan of any kind.**

We make cost-sharing the development of Stewardship plans a high priority, not only because this is the entry point to the program, but because a plan can open up a world of knowledge and project possibilities for landowners. We want to help you get headed in the direction that's right for you and for your land.

Once your plan is approved and you are enrolled in the Stewardship Program, you will be eligible for additional cost-sharing assistance for many of the activities recommended in your plan.

WHAT KINDS OF STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITIES MAY BE COST-SHARED?

Below is a list of some of the management activities that are eligible for cost-sharing with our U.S. Forest Service funding to encourage good stewardship. Practices must be recommended in your plan to be eligible for cost-sharing. Practices can not be cost-shared retroactively; they must be signed-up for and approved before the work begins.

*Note: smaller properties may join the program and receive cost-sharing for management practices, but are not eligible for cost-sharing plans.

**Landowners taking possession of a new property with an existing plan may have a new plan written and qualify for cost-sharing.



Funding levels vary from year to year. Check with your DCR Service Forester or your forester for the full list of eligible practices, cost-share availability, and an application.

Forest Regeneration

site preparation; fertilization; seedling planting for the establishment of forest cover for wood production or wildlife habitat

Forest Improvement

thinning and pruning to improve the quality and productivity of trees for timber, nut, fruit, and wildlife food crops

Soil & Water Protection

for forestlands with critically eroding areas that are not part of a commercial operation: establishment of permanent vegetation; design and layout of corrective measures; water diversions; and other stabilizations

Wildlife Habitat Enhancement

forest openings to promote early successional plant growth; permanent herbaceous wildlife plantings; clearing around abandoned orchards and mast trees to spur fruiting and vigor; snags and artificial cavities where in short supply; nest boxes; rare species inventory and habitat modification

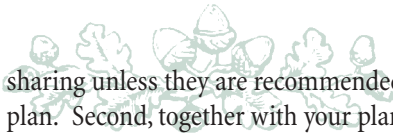
Forest Recreation

creation of vistas; vegetation clearing for trails

Invasive Species Control

mowing or chemical spraying of exotic invasive plants such as multiflora rose, Oriental bitter-sweet, etc.

Make sure that as your forester is developing your Stewardship plan, he or she knows what types of activities you may be interested in pursuing. There are two reasons for this. First, as stated above, activities are not eligible for cost-



sharing unless they are recommended in the plan. Second, together with your plan preparer, you can consider projects that might generate income to help pay for others that don't. This way you won't find yourself dependent on cost-shares to get work done on your land. For example, you might want to reinvest timber sale revenue into habitat improvements or trail work. In some cases, a carefully designed harvest can simultaneously result in both a trail network and some wildlife habitat improvement with only modest compromises on net revenue.

Regardless of whether or not you are interested in harvesting timber, it's good to understand the potential economic value of your forestland.


COMPATABILITY WITH CHAPTER 61 & 61A

Many landowners decide to enroll in both the Forest Stewardship Program and in the state's current use tax programs, Chapters 61 & 61A. Both programs are designed for landowners who intend to keep land forested and are interested in carrying out activities to enhance their forest according to a 10-year plan.

Taking an educational approach, the Stewardship Program encourages management for a wide variety of objectives; landowners are not required to complete activities proposed in the plan.

In contrast, Chapter 61 & 61A plans are legally binding commitments that give favorable tax treatment to landowners interested in keeping forestland undeveloped. Chapters 61 & 61A plans require a certain level of active wood products management to be completed within the established 10-year time frame.

Joint Stewardship/CH 61 & 61A plans therefore will contain some optional Stewardship activi-



ties and some obligatory CH 61 activities. If you are comfortable with managing your woodland to improve the quality and quantity of forest products and would like to qualify for favorable tax treatment, a combination CH61/Stewardship plan may be a good choice for you.

LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

Enrollment in the Stewardship Program alone carries no legal obligations. You are *not* required to complete the activities proposed in the plan. It is understood that plans, financial circumstances, markets, and other factors change. Your 10-year plan is your intention to do certain stewardship activities, but is not a binding contract. However, if you complete a Stewardship project with the help of federal or state funding, you will be expected to maintain that practice for 10 years. If the integrity of a project is destroyed, you would be expected to pay back the funds you had received.

THE NEXT STEP

Call your local DCR Service Forester (see page 14 for regional offices) for advice on getting started, a cost-share application, and a list of Massachusetts licensed foresters who can help you develop your Forest Stewardship plan.



SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Visit the D.C.R. website
[www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/forestry/
service/steward.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/forestry/service/steward.htm)

Dept. of Conservation and Recreation Division of State Parks & Recreation Offices

Southeastern Massachusetts

Myles Standish State Forest
Cranberry Road, Box 66
South Carver, MA 02366
508-866-2580

Northeastern Massachusetts

817 Lowell Road, P.O. Box 829
Carlisle, MA 01741
978-369-3351

Central Massachusetts

Route 110, Box 155
Clinton, MA 01510
978-368-0126

Connecticut Valley

Box 484
Amherst, MA 01004
413-545-5993

Berkshire

740 South Street, Box 1433
Pittsfield, MA 01202
413-442-8928

or

Call 1-800-783-2311 any time!

The Forest Stewardship Program is a program of the Massachusetts Dept. of Conservation and Recreation – Division of Forests & Parks, and is funded by the US Forest Service and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. It is open to all eligible applicants without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, or disability.

Photo credits: Susan Campbell

Revised May, 2005



MASSACHUSETTS
FOREST STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

433 West Street

Amherst, MA. 01002

www.mass.gov/dcr



dcr
Massachusetts

